



# Does Leadership *Matter?*

IMPLICATIONS FOR  
LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND THE SCHOOL  
AS A LEARNING  
ORGANISATION

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NEMZETI ERŐFORRÁS  
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## **Implications for Leadership Development and the School as a Learning Organisation**

ENIRDELM Conference, Szeged, 2010

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## Introduction

This volume is one of the main results of the 19th conference of ENIRDELM, which was held in Szeged, Hungary, in September 2010. ENIRDELM is a collaborative network of researchers, educational developers, consultants and trainers, school directors and administrators, all professionals who are involved in educational leadership issues. It is a platform for open discussion, for sharing new approaches regarding educational leadership and quality. The self-assisting spirit of ENIRDELM has always made the outcomes of the annual conference dependent on the contributions of its members and participants. We are grateful to our participants for making the publication of this book possible.

Education has an increasing and crucial role in forming a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous society. The speed of change around the world, especially the dramatic acceleration of knowledge, demands continuous learning. The meaning of learning itself has changed. Leadership has a key role in responding to these changes, particularly in schools, by enhancing people's competence and efficacy and helping them to share their knowledge with each other. Transforming personal and group competence and efficacy into organisational learning, culture and performance is the leaders' challenge.

Over the past three years the discussion at ENIRDELM conferences has focused on fundamental education leadership issues such as: the leaders' moral responsibility for sustainable development and the world, including the responsibility for the development of the competencies of each and every student (Uppsala, 2007), exploring the link between learning leading and leading learning (Bergen, 2008) and a new type of professionalism required in a turbulent and complex world (Antwerp, 2009).

The ENIRDELM Board agreed upon the theme of the relation between leadership and students' performance and, more broadly, the quality of schooling. This theme provides continuity and further in-depth exploration of the impact of leadership on learning in its broadest sense: "*Does leadership matter? Implications for Leadership Development and the School as a Learning Organisation*".

The conference focused on the connection between learning and school leadership, including the impact of leadership on both qualitative and measurable learning outcomes. It was aimed to analyse this relationship in a broad sense, because learning has never played a more important role in living a successful and happy life than now. In addition, it is learning that now, in the 21st century leads to the sustainable development of modern societies. It can be stated that the process of learning is characterised by the same complexity as the globalised and flattened world – to use the words of Thomas L. Friedmann, who wrote a professional bestseller publication about globalisation<sup>1</sup>. The school and the education system is not an isolated island within the society where pupils are prepared for the outside world, rather it is the outside world itself, or at least it is such if the school wishes to meet the expectations of the society. The same complexity characterises school leadership as well. And it is this complexity that poses one of the greatest challenges for modern school leadership. Leaders have to deal with the situation where it is mainly indirect tools that can influence the efficiency of learning and this influence requires the precise design planning work of an architect as well as intuition and creativity. If professionalism has ever been an important factor in leadership, this is now the very time for it. This is reflected in the fact that the European Union has invited applicants to tender for the development of leadership policy. The standpoint of the EU is summarised in the European Policy Network on School Leadership: "*Member States agree that the knowledge, skills and commitment of teachers, and quality of school leadership, are most important factors in achieving high quality educational outcomes*".

The conference provided a perfect opportunity for the audience to have a deep discussion about the topic described above, and to follow various presentations, get acquainted with new models and approaches. Hopefully,

<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. Friedmann (2005): *The World Is Flat*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York. In 2005 *The World Is Flat* was given the first *Financial Times* and Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award.

the selection of papers and presentations will give a good overview about how rich and deep the content and the process were that participants could enjoy. Next comes a description of the studies you can find in this volume.

The conference participants, presenters and the authors of the studies published in this volume did not provide a direct response to the question raised in the title of the conference, i.e., “Does Leadership Matter?”. Most probably this was so because in their understanding, it is indispensable for the successful operation of a school to function as a learning organisation, where leadership has a decisive role. The lectures and studies in this volume are all about the method of how to do this, about the national and international policies that are related to educational leadership, research and developments, which depict the role of leadership in transforming schools into learning organisations from various aspects.

We opted for these various aspects and leadership levels as structural guidelines for grouping the studies into chapters. In some instances, where a certain study should go in the volume was quite obvious, however, in some other cases we, the editors ourselves were a little uncertain. Accepting a certain degree of subjectivity, we divided the book into five content chapters: *Foundation*, *System*, *Organisation* and *Leader*, at last *Workshop and Field Visit*. Chapter 1 entitled *Foundation* contains the key-note paper written by Halász and Sleegers, and the lecture of Molnár who comes from the field of business. These lectures served as the professional foundation of the conference, and this is the exact role we intended to give to this chapter. Chapter 2 entitled *System* contains the lectures of Branson, Berg, Révész, Vass and Ivanova, who analyse and present the influence institutional leadership has on learning efficacy as a system. The papers by Pol, Daiktere, Baráth-Cseh and Faragó deal with the interpretation of the school as a learning organisation, its diagnosis and development, therefore they can be found in Chapter 3 on *Organisation*. Chapter 4 consists of the studies written by Verbiest, Haskova, Ekiert-Oldroyd and Aksu, as well as the paper presented at the 2009 conference in Antwerp, which was not included in the previous volume. All the latter papers deal with the *Leader* in some respect or another.

The two authors of the Chapter 1 entitled *Foundation* set the tone of the book from two different focuses. They both concentrate on the issue of assuring the quality of school learning. Halász, in his study on the influence of institutional leadership on learner efficacy, writes about recent EU

developments, policies and directives in the issue. Sleegers also talks about the efficacy of school learning, however, he examines the direct impact teachers exert. The title of his lecture also pointed to the fact that teaching practices should change (Changing teaching practices). Based on Dutch research results, he draws attention to the fact that the change in teachers' professional culture is dependent on transformational leadership. The lecture of Molnár, who comes from the business sector, proves that productive organisations can only be efficient if they are capable of functioning as learning organisations, so this is why the field of education can learn a lot from the for-profit sector and its players in terms of establishing and operating successful learning organisations.

The first author in Chapter 2 entitled *System* is Branson, who sees the solution for the global problem of increasing professional expectations towards education leaders and a decreasing interest in fulfilling this type of position in a bigger coherence and supportive nature of the education system. His paper is unique in the sense that he employs the Australian "bottom-up" perspective, which is somewhat uncommon in our European way of thinking. Living in the other part of the globe, Berg in his study introduces the complex system and set of expectations that leaders have to meet, which – also according to Branson – is one of the reasons why institutional leadership is quite a threatening perspective for many. Révész carries on with the topic introduced by Halász in the foundation lecture, i.e., the relationship between school leadership and learner performances, and deals with issues specific for Central-Europe and Hungary. In his study he gives an account of the experiences gained from a Central-European project, which was aimed at developing school leadership in the interest of learner performance improvement. Vass in his study discusses the Hungarian practices of curriculum development. The study closing the chapter was written by Ivanova, who deals with the new type of learning practices at universities and the necessary applications of ICT in university training. How is this connected to the success of public education? Probably learning experiences are decisive in terms of teacher practice. If universities realise that they need to change their way of organising education, this could significantly speed up the application of personalised learning organisation procedures in public education.

The third chapter of the volume is about the *Organisation*. Pol and his co-authors attempt to interpret organisational learning that takes place at schools. Daiktere writes about a Latvian research that seeks answer to what



factors and in what ways influence the organisational culture of schools. Baráth-Cseh authors describe an organisation diagnostical procedure that has been applied successfully in several Hungarian school development programmes. Faragó examines the school leaders' tasks and opportunities in the field of HRM (Human Resource Management) from a learner development aspect. She points out that the utilisation of HRM opportunities can have an influence on the learners' learning efficiency. This is strongly connected to Pol's study of learner organisations and the issue raised by Daiktere, i.e., who has what kind of roles in the shaping of organisation cultures, and it is also connected to the organisation development model introduced by Baráth-Cseh, in which the personal competencies of the people comprising the organisation and the harmonisation of personal and organisational goals and competencies play a crucial role.

Chapter 4 – entitled *Leader* – starts with the study of Verbiest, which is related to several former authors' topics, by dealing with new interpretations of instructional leadership, and effective professional learning of teachers. He also believes that the leader of the institution has a key role in this process. In his study he describes a logically built-up process that helps establish the routine of professional learning for teachers. The paper of Hašková focuses on the widely discussed issue of leader expectations and one possible method of measuring them. The study of Ekiert-Oldroyd discusses a typical disease of our age that also effects teachers and leaders alike, i.e., the sources of school stress. In this study we can read about several Polish researches that focused on the main sources of stress Polish teachers and school leaders experience, and the most commonly used ways of coping with stress. Aksu gives an account of what the most important values are for school-leaders in and around Antalya in terms of leadership. The results are compared with the findings of surveys carried out in three European countries. What closes the chapter is a lecture given at the Antwerp conference back in 2009, but which was not included in that particular volume. The author, Ekiert-Oldroyd gave her lecture at the afore-mentioned conference that dealt with successful school leadership in "turbulent times", but it is also related to our topical issue. In the light of an international research, it examines what significance key leader competencies and creativity have in successful school leadership in the times of rapidly changing circumstances.

In Chapter 5, unlike in other conference volumes, the Reader can read about a short overview of workshops and field visits. Our aim here was to show how vibrant and intense the cooperation is that characterises not only the ENIRDELM conferences but the entire network. Partly encouraged by the professional proposals, project ideas and initiatives of the conferences, long-term research, development and innovation programmes were launched, which are introduced and followed-up in the workshops. One illustrative example for this is the EL4SD (Educational Leadership for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup>) programme headed by Bottery, which is in its third year of running and which started off by examining the value concepts of school leaders in Europe, and which by now has grown into a comparative research encompassing three continents.

The workshops also provide the participants with the opportunity to describe already existing models that are supported by empirical results and research and which offer the prospect of stepping ahead in the field of learning development. Such was the workshop held by Berg and colleagues, where a Swedish development programme, a model was introduced in which school development did not only serve as a solution to developing the ability of giving relevant answers to the environment but also as a way of planning and executing a process that would result in the school taking a prominent role in developing the entire local (urban) community.

In the closing paper of this chapter, Poór writes about a field visit to HUNSEM, which – in accordance with the traditions of ENIRDELM – facilitated the sharing of experiences and knowledge of the visitors and those who were visited, thus enhancing learning from one another.

*The editors*

<sup>2</sup> For details see: <http://www.enirdelm.org/index.php?sida=el4sd>